



Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2016

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) convened for its regular monthly meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the above date in the Board Room at the YWCA of Greensboro. **Chair Zac Engle** presided over the meeting.

Commissioners Present: Phillips, Murphy, Wesley-Lamin, Perry-Garnette, Engle, King, Issifou, Cobbler, Hawkins, Wils

Commissioners Absent: Burkart, Arbuckle, Bhardwaj, Kennedy

Human Relations Department Staff: Jodie Stanley, Love Crossling

Legal Department Staff: Rosetta Davidson

Visitors: Raleigh Stout, Kalynn Gibson, Alex Barnett, Rosetta Davidson, Sierra, Deborah, Autumn, Savannah, Rudy Olivo, Jamea Blakey, Kelly Parker, Christy Crowder, Haley Schaefer

I. Call to Order

Chair Engle called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

II. Moment of Silent Meditation

Chair Engle called for a moment of silent meditation.

III. Chair Report

Chair Engle began by commenting on the election, stating that the difficult conversations needed to continue regardless of the results. There was work to be done and he encouraged commissioners to work to have an impact on the community. He shared that he attended the A&T Homecoming event, adding that it was well attended. He announced several upcoming events, including the Doing Our Work Session, PCR Series (Cuffs to Courtroom on December 7), and the Mental Health Awareness event. Engle continued with an announcement that Commissioner Arbuckle wanted to host the commission for a holiday potluck. He also encouraged commissioners to work with City staff to submit work plans for future programming.

Engle finished by stating that last month's minutes were not completed to normal City standards and required substantial editing, advising commissioners to let him know if they needed more time to review the minutes.

Committee Reports

Education

Commissioner Wils advised that much of his activity recently was related to the recent election and campaigning for Hillary Clinton, adding that he had concern about the rhetoric that was part of the recent campaign. Being on the front lines of education, in his opinion, put him in a unique position to talk to and find a way to support children who were hurting because of the things that were stated from the podium during the campaign. Love Crossling advised that they had the option to partner with the International Advisory Committee to address youth concerns over deportation, perhaps incorporating an education piece about the realities of deportation. She expressed that she had heard concern from middle and elementary students about their concerns and fears, and that it would be worth partnering with the IAC to address concerns. Wils thanked Crossling, adding that he was concerned with respecting the office of President Elect Trump along with isolating the unfortunate campaign rhetoric that has had such a negative impact, especially on the Muslim students.

Commissioner Perry-Garnette added that the YWCA was also fielding concerns from people and children as a result of hearing the recent results of the election, stating that it was difficult to encourage people to model good behavior when they did not see that behavior being modeled by the leadership of the country. Perry-Garnette expressed concern especially for the LGBT community after Vice President Pence's recent comments that they would take action against the LGBT community. She continued by stating that it was difficult to identify the difference between a set of beliefs and campaign rhetoric, and finished by stating that part of the reason this would be so difficult was that this was the first time that the country had ever had to deal with this issue. Wils agreed, stating that his students had expressed concern over gay parents being forced to divorce, adding that this was politics having a real-time impact on the home front.

Engle encouraged commissioners that even within the passion around the results of the recent election, there was nothing to stop the HRC from doing the work they needed to do, and from having a powerful impact. He encouraged the visiting college students that they were needed, and that it was important to be involved in local elections.

Perry-Garnette pointed out that immigration policy was federal, and that if her marriage was overturned, and there was nothing the City of Greensboro could do about it. Some of these things were out of the control of local government. Perry-Garnette expressed appreciation for the results of the recent local voting, especially the passing of the bonds, but stated again that there were major, founded fears about what would happen going forward.

Engle invited additional visitors to introduce themselves. Kelly Parker, Christy Crowder, Haley Schaefer, and Rudy Olivo from Mark Walker's office introduced themselves.

Police Community Review Board

Commissioner Cobbler shared that the PCRB was able to hear about Tom Phillip's experience with the simulator, and that some of the members were part of the procedural training through the GPD's office of community engagement. No cases were heard.

Engle advised that he was on schedule to take part of that training. Addressing Crossling, he advised that it was necessary to set up a meeting with City Attorney Tom Carruthers, several council members and staff to discuss concerns over the waiver that was required to do the ride along. Commissioner Wesley-Lamin asked what the concerns were over the waiver. Phillips stated that it was a comprehensive signing away of liability, leaving the City with no responsibility, even if it was a staff member's fault if something happened. Engle stressed that they would seek clarity on this matter.

Employment Committee

Commissioner Burkart was not present. Engle went over Commissioner Burkart's report, stating that she was partnering with the Commission on the Status of Women on an equal pay program.

Human Services Committee

Commissioner King shared that the Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast planning was almost complete. They would have a meeting the following week to go over assignments, but they had retained a speaker, sponsorships were coming in and Marion Davis was working on invitations. King shared ticket purchasing information and asked all to save the event date of January 16. King also shared about the upcoming event on mental health and housing, to take place November 17.

Montgomery/Wells Housing Committee

Commissioner Issifou shared that they were still working on the Hidden Side of Housing Series and announced that the next event would be held in partnership with the Mental Health Awareness Series on November 17.

Committee for Social Equity

Commissioner Hawkins shared about the upcoming Thrive GSO program which focused on expungement and also about an event he attended recently that addressed police-community relations through the medium of spoken word. Wesley-Lamin asked when the next CSE meeting would be. He advised that it would take place after the Thrive GSO event coming up on November 16. Engle asked to be added to that meeting invitation.

International Advisory Committee

Jodie Stanley shared the items on the IAC report, which included an update on the homicide of the Sudanese resident and the resulting investigation and conversations with the Police Department. Stanley also shared that IAC secretary Franca Jalloh would represent the IAC at the FaithAction Multicultural Festival, and that the IAC was increasingly aware of concerns rippling through the immigrant community as a result of the recent election. She added that recent reports shared by Yacine Kout indicated that while the graduation rate in Guilford County was rising, that of Guilford County's Hispanic/Latino students was dropping. The IAC was considering coming around this issue to address and raise awareness.

Stanley finished by announcing the upcoming IAC leadership election, which would take place in mid-February. She announced that they were still looking for members to add to the nominating committee and invited HRC commissioners to consider serving in this capacity.

Staff Report

Crossling went on record apologizing for the glitch that happened with the meeting minutes from the former meeting.

Crossling posed a process question for the HRC about the speed with which they would make decisions, and the turnaround time in which they wanted requests fulfilled. She stated that the Human Relations Department was a small staff of four, and that fact impacted the speed with which they could provide information and results.

Crossling explained that because the HRC was a high profile group, after the HRC passed the resolution at the last meeting, staff was asked to take very quick action on the resolution that they passed. In addition, the press then requested meeting minutes and emails, which staff was required to provide in a timely manner.

Engle advised that the issue discussed was not a new issue; the information had been requested many times from the community. Engle advised that it was more important to provide accurate information rather than speedy information. Engle added that if additional staff was required, he would be happy to advocate for that. Engle stated that in retrospect, he felt that the HRC made the right decision in passing the motion.

Crossling agreed that passing the resolution was completely within the realm of the work of the HRC, but that staff would have been happy to assist in crafting a resolution that more accurately reflected the current system. Crossling advised that she was not necessarily referring to minutes, but that staff could provide guidance with the action steps and resolutions that could most efficiently get the HRC the progress it sought. She added that the requests for additional staff had been requested and she had the support to move ahead, but that it was a tedious process that required the rewriting of positions. Crossling stated that her question was about how quickly the HRC wanted staff to turn around requests with resolutions and memos, stating that staff would be happy to have minutes provided the following day if that was the wish of the Commission.

Perry-Garnette shared that for her, the last issue was a very time sensitive one. Pushing it back for a month would not have been effective. Perry-Garnette stated that it would be fine for staff to explain time constraints to members of HRC, even if the community suspected motives if a request took longer than usual. She added that if we needed to take more time to produce documents that were accurate, that was fine.

Engle pointed out that a member of the Legal department was present and he thought that should continue. He expressed his desire again that the issue discussed at the last meeting should stay with the PCRB.

Phillips stated that a council member expressed concern that a resolution was passed Thursday and there was an expectation that Council respond to it the following Tuesday without having digested or processed the information.

Crossling explained that to be added to a council meeting, it had to go through the internal Council agenda process. She added that staff would be happy to share documents and requests with the Council liaison to make sure that it was distributed, and allow Council to decide how to respond and when.

Engle announced that taking this information into consideration, they would need to discuss meeting dates for 2017, possibly moving the regular meeting to the last Thursday of the month. Crossling pointed out that even if they moved it to the last Thursday, a resolution could not realistically be added to the following Tuesday night's Council meeting. Engle encouraged Crossling to bring her proposed staff changes to the next commission meeting, adding that the commission had taken great strides in the right direction and he wanted to see that continue.

Raleigh Stout asked if they needed a resolution addressed quickly, couldn't they appeal to one or two council members to address it and get it passed through more quickly. Engle advised that it was possible, and that because of the longstanding nature of the issue discussed at the last meeting, having the community approach the HRC was something that all should have seen coming.

Commissioner Hawkins spoke to the passion and emotion that was expressed at the last meeting. Engle encouraged all that they should not feel that they should not pass resolutions or respond to community concerns, but simply to remember that they were not a governing board. He encouraged commissioners to remember that it was their role to be a bridge to the community. Phillips added that he called several council members after the last meeting, advising them of the nature of the resolution and recommending that they consider the perspective of the HRC.

Crossling advised that after the last HRC resolution was passed, she was asked if the HRC had the right to do that, and that her response was, yes, they did. Crossling detailed several steps that she had taken to ensure that there was comprehensive understanding about the role of the HRC. She also offered that perhaps staff could create sample resolutions that Commissioners would be able to use and provide guidance to ensure that a resolution was efficient and productive. King asked if Crossling was not able to attend, and if Jodie Stanley was not able to attend, who would provide guidance. Crossling explained that going forward, staff would ensure that legal staff would be present to provide guidance, and that either she or Stanley would be present at each meeting, adding that she had questioned the staff member that covered the last meeting.

King expressed that it was her personal opinion that because they were a body, they should not independently discuss decisions made as a body. Engle respectfully disagreed with King, advising that he actually wanted commissioners to reach out to the council members they were familiar with. Phillips added that he felt it best to know what happened so that they could advocate. Engle again encouraged all Commissioners to speak regularly to Council Members, adding that he felt that often, not enough conversation was held with Council Members. Engle added that regular conversation with Council Members gave the opportunity to enhance trust and understanding of decisions made. Phillips added that the only reason he called Council Members was because he wanted them to be aware of the decision made, and he asked for them to give attention to the matter.

Commissioner Wesley-Lamin shared that while she was not in attendance at the last meeting, she took exception to the comment made by the Mayor during recent closed session about the HRC, adding that it should not have taken the action of the HRC to encourage Council to come up with the right decision. Issifou stated his opinion that they were tasked to fulfill the role of being the body that the people could approach for action, and to take the voice of the people to Council.

Engle advised that he had seen governing bodies make decisions with far less information, that there would always be a need for them to have the important discussions. Engle publically welcomed the Legal representative, also expressing his appreciation for the visitors present, stating that they were a needed perspective.

Perry-Garnette commented that it was not necessarily the role of the HRC to condemn Council when they didn't do or act the way the HRC thought they should. It was the role of the HRC to give people the opportunity to speak, that it was so important to have a body that would listen to the concerns of the people and offer the public a space to speak. In addition, perhaps HRC could add a caveat to the beginning of their meetings and make a commitment to the public that their concerns would be relayed to Council. She finished by stating, "We are not responsible for anyone else's job, we are responsible for our own. We can't control the world, but we can listen."

Hawkins expressed that sometimes, the decisions of the HRC may counter the decisions or thought processes of council and vice versa, and that that was not necessarily a bad thing. The HRC's role was to serve and to be the voice of the people and citizens of Greensboro.

Engle and Crossling agreed that they would review necessary changes with the budget, and that it would be helpful for staff to provide examples of a resolution. Hawkins thanked Crossling for staff's efforts, and apologized for any oversight on the part of the Commission in the creation of last month's resolution.

VI. Review of Meeting Minutes

Engle encouraged commissioners to carefully review the minutes. Perry-Garnette asked for clarity about the issue with the minutes. Engle advised that the minutes, because of the nature of the meeting, were requested before the standard time, and that they were inaccurate with misspellings, names, inaccurate sentences, tense and grammatical errors. Engle advised that with careful editing, what was provided at this particular meeting should be accurate. Crossling advised that Stanley's normal protocol was to take minutes during the meeting, without a recording. Crossling advised that the staff member filling in at last month's minutes used a poor quality recording.

Perry-Garnette suggested that they approve the minutes, stressing that it was important to note that they were adjusted.

Motion to Approve the Amended October Meeting Minutes

Moved by: Commissioner Perry-Garnette

Seconded by: Commissioner Phillips

The motion was passed unanimously.

Engle opened the floor to comments. Schaefer posed a question asking for clarity about the turnaround time. Crossling explained that at the last meeting, the HRC was asked to pass a resolution or proposal asking that Council and the PCRB review documents, but that the issue was that it was not the role of the HRC to request that the PCRB review a case, that it had to come from a complainant. Engle added that the reason the HRC asked that the PCRB review the case was because reviewing cases was outside the purview of the HRC, and that the PCRB was the body tasked with accountability over Police matters. Engle added that they made the resolution not knowing that they were not able to do that, because they were not informed.

Engle invited the last visitor to introduce herself. Jamea Blakey shared that she was taking a class at UNCG and was attending the meeting as part of the course requirements.

Engle invited all visitors to follow the HRC on facebook and to get involved. He thanked everyone for coming.

IX. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn.

Moved by: Commissioner Wils

Seconded by: Commissioner Hawkins

The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Minutes Approved by:

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Greensboro Human Relations Commission

_____/_____/_____

Date